

Vaginal bleeding due to leech

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Summary

An unusual presentation of leech infestation leading to vaginal bleeding is reported.

KEY WORDS: leech infestation, vaginal bleeding.

Introduction

With the exception of the application of leeches to the pudenda, perineum and the inner surface of the thighs for the purpose of criminal abortion (Modi, 1972), no case of vaginal bleeding due to leeches has been reported. We describe such a case here.

Case report

A 16-year-old unmarried girl reported with vaginal bleeding of 5 days duration. History revealed that she had gone to her village home and had taken a bath in the pond 6 days earlier. Her menarche had occurred at the age of 14 years, with regular menstrual periods thereafter.

Pelvic examination revealed no evidence of external injury of the genitalia, vagina and cervix. The uterus was ante-verted without any signs of pregnancy. There was blood on the examining finger-stalls. Investigations included pregnancy tests and blood counts. Bleeding, clotting and prothrombin times were all within normal limits.

Three days later, the patient reported with profuse bleeding from the vagina and lower abdominal pain. Examination at this time revealed moderate bleeding coming from the uterine cavity. It was decided to

perform dilatation and curettage. The moment the cervix was dilated to Hegar No.-4, there was a marked contraction of the uterus discharging about 200 ml of blood. In the discharged blood, there was a 6 cm headless body of a leech engorged with blood. The curettage revealed fragments of the head, confirmed to be a leech on histological examination. The patient made a full recovery.

Discussion

Although abnormal vaginal bleeding is one of the commonest complaints among females, leech infestation has not been previously documented as a cause.

The ponds in this part of India are mostly unhygienic and dirty. The water is often used for baths, washing utensils and animals, and even for human consumption in villages. Leeches are commonly present in the ponds, particularly in the rainy season. The history in the present case strongly suggests that accidental infestation of the uterine cavity by a leech had occurred. The prevention of this problem is a matter of more importance to public health administrators than to a mere gynaecologist.

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Reference

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